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Sermons, Orations, Popular Lectures, &c.

ANDREW J. GRAHAM AND CHARLES B. COLLAR,

REPORTERS.

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ORATION

BY GEORGE BANCROFT,

ON THE

TWENTY-SECOND OF FEBRUARY, 1862.

TO WHICH IS ADDED

WASHINGTON'S FAREWELL ADDRESS.

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THE PULPIT AND ROSTRUM,

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CONTAINS REPORTS OF THE BEST

SERMONS, LECTURES, ORATIONS, Etc.

ANDREW J. GRAHAM and CHARLES B. COLLAR, Reporters.

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MR. BANCROFT'S ORATION.

Oration delivered by George Bancroft before the Mayor, Common Council, and Citizens of New York, on the 22d of February, 1862, at the request of the Common Council.

"Ubi judicia desinunt incipit bellum."—*Sir Edward Hyde against the Ship-money Judges.* 4 *Somers' Tracts*, 304.

MEN OF NEW YORK: As the organ of the city of New York on this occasion, it is my first duty to remind you that we owe thanks to Almighty God for the patriots who achieved the independence of the United States, and who formed "the unity of government which constitutes us one people." To-day we declare to peoples and to princes that that union is complete and shall not be impaired, is dear to us and shall be preserved. The wise and the good in each hemisphere desire us to continue one; every fibre of the sensitive heart of the indivisible France, in spite of some appearances, throbs in favor of our existence as a nation; the people of England I shall believe are with us, so long as there are among them men like Bright and Stuart Mill; Italy has learned from us to adhere to her passion for bringing together the country which the selfishness of oppression had dismembered; and the ill-cemented fragments of Germany derive from us a hope of a better reunion. The most wonderful career of improvement in the history of the race is the witness that we are a nation. Now, in the day of our tribulation, the people have proved that they are inspired with life by their uprising in the majesty of undivided conviction, concentrated power, and determined purpose; by their unrepining resignation to suffering and privation; by their sublime patience under strange discomfitures and weary delays and long-continued inactivity, from inability and perplexity, or from judgment and choice; by their outspoken joy when the spell was broken of the seeming paralysis of their gigantic preparations; by the heartiness of their response to General Grant when he proposed "to move immediately on the enemy's works." Now the rulers of the earth will come to know that under the Constitution which makes us one people, there exists

no authority that can alienate a single inch of the territory of the United States; that while we claim for each individual the right of emigration, there is no possible conspiracy, combination, or convention that can discharge any one citizen from his allegiance so long as he remains on our soil, though each one may for himself dissolve that allegiance by self-exile and flight. These many and ever-increasing United States are one, now and for coming ages.

The only ground of hope for the perpetuity of our Union, you will find, men of New York, in the words of Washington, spoken in this city. When, in the presence of your fathers, Washington, standing under the canopy of the sky, had taken the oath to support the Constitution, he returned into the Senate Chamber, to interpret to the First Congress the principles of our great charter, and the fit policy for the nation to pursue. Then it was that he laid down as their rule "the pure and immutable principles of private morality," and "*the eternal rules of order and right which Heaven itself has ordained.*" And the House of Representatives, using the pen of Madison to frame its answer, accepted his enlightened maxims, and owned the obligation to "adore the invisible hand which has led the American people through so many difficulties, to cherish a conscious responsibility for the destiny of Republican liberty." On these principles the government which makes us one people was put in motion, while the foundations of monarchy in France were crumbling away, and the beams that upheld the civilization of the Middle Ages were falling in. During the half century which succeeded, France underwent more revolutions than I can readily count up; Spain had many forms of government in rapid succession; the dynasty of Portugal was driven for refuge to South America; the empire of Germany went down in the whirlpool of revolution; Russia has been convulsed by a fearful plot for insurrection; Italy was many times reconstructed; the Pope lost and won temporal power, and has been almost shorn of it again; the institutions of Great Britain have been thrice essentially modified by the annexation of Ireland; by the reform of Parliament, which was, in fact, a revolution; and by opening the doors of its two Houses to men of all creeds; and bloody insurrections have shaken English power to its foundation in Ireland, Canada, and Hindostan.

During all these convulsions the United States stood unchanged, admitting none but the slightest modifications in its charter, and proving itself the most stable government of the civilized world. But at last "we have fallen on evil days." "The propitious smiles of

Gift
Warren L. Perry
April 29, 1939

Heaven," such are the words of Washington, "can never be expected on a nation that disregards the eternal rules of order and right." During eleven years of perverse government those rules were disregarded; and it came to pass that men who should firmly avow the sentiments of Washington, and Jefferson, and Franklin, and Chancellor Livingston were disfranchised for the public service; that the spotless chief-justice whom Washington placed at the head of our Supreme Court could by no possibility have been nominated for that office, or confirmed. Nay, the corrupt influence invaded even the very home of justice. The final decree of the Supreme Court, in its decision on a particular case, must be respected and obeyed; the present chief-justice has, on one memorable appeal, accompanied his decision with an impassioned declamation, wherein, with profound immorality, which no one has as yet fully laid bare, treating the people of the United States as a shrew to be tamed by an open scorn of the facts of history, with a dreary industry collecting cases where justice may have slumbered or weakness been oppressed, compensating for want of evidence by confidence of assertion, with a partiality that would have disgraced an advocate neglecting humane decisions of colonial courts and the enduring memorials of colonial statute-books, in his party zeal to prove that the fathers of our country held the negro to have "no rights which the white man was bound to respect," he has not only denied the rights of man and the liberties of mankind, but has not left a foothold for the liberty of the white man to rest upon.

That ill-starred disquisition is the starting-point of this rebellion, which, for a quarter of a century, had been vainly preparing to raise its head. "When courts of justice fail, war begins." The so-called opinion of Taney, who, I trust, did not intend to hang out the flag of disunion, that rash offense to the conscious memory of the millions, upheaved our country with the excitement which swept over those of us who vainly hoped to preserve a strong and sufficient though narrow isthmus that might stand between the conflicting floods. No nation can adopt that judgment as its rule and live; the judgment has in it no element of political vitality; I will not say it is an invocation of the dead past; there never was a past that accepted such opinions. If we want the opinions received in the days when our Constitution was framed, we will not take them second-hand from our chief-justice; we will let the men of that day speak for themselves. How will our American magistrate sink when arraigned, as he will be, before the tribunal of humanity! how

terrible will be the verdict against him, when he is put in comparison with Washington's political teacher, the great Montesquieu, the enlightened magistrate of France, in what are esteemed the worst days of her monarchy! The argument from the difference of race which Taney thrusts forward with passionate confidence, as a proof of complete disqualification, is brought forward by Montesquieu as a scathing satire on all the brood of despots who were supposed to uphold slavery as tolerable in itself. The rights of MANKIND, that precious word which had no equivalent in the language of Hindostan, or Judea, or Greece, or Rome, or any ante-Christian tongue, found their supporter in Washington and Hamilton, in Franklin and Livingston, in Otis, George Mason, and Gadsden; in all the greatest men of our early history. The one rule from which the makers of our first Confederacy, and then of our national Constitution, never swerved, is this: to fix no constitutional disability on any one. Whatever might stand in the way of any man from opinion, ancestry, weakness of mind, inferiority or inconvenience of any kind, was itself not formed into a permanent disfranchisement. The Constitution of the United States was made under the recognized influence of "the eternal rule of order and right," so that, as far as its jurisdiction extends, it raised at once the numerous class who had been chattels into the condition of persons; it neither originates nor perpetuates inequality.

It is another trait in Washington's character which may particularly interest this opulent city, where enterprise, and skill, and industry are forever producing and amassing wealth, that while he held the acquisition of fortune by honest ways a proper object of desire, he drew a careful distinction between the pursuits of business and the service of his country. He held that every man must be ready to devote to the good of his country his ability, his wealth, and his life; and he never suffered the public service to become to him a source of gain. It is rumored that men among us have known how to obtain from the government, for a moderate, and incidental, and essentially irresponsible use of little else than their judgment, sums of money which exceed the whole direct tax levied upon one of our smaller States. If this be so, while it implies a shameful want of patriotism in individuals, it implies also a blamable want of sagacity in the executive departments which must have made their selections of agents perversely or blindfold. In the name of this city, I declare the great body of its people to have a patriotism without blemish of selfishness. In the name of the

Chamber of Commerce, may I not venture to say of our merchants, as a class, that the pretence of a necessity for resorting to extravagant compensation for simple, ordinary service, is a calumny on a body of generous and devotedly patriotic men? In the name of the mechanics I repel the insinuation; and it is known to all that the conduct of the poor of our city, during this war, has, for disinterestedness, and exalted feeling, and firm resolve, and courageous resignation, gone beyond all praise.

The disinterestedness of Washington's conduct beams forth in still greater beauty, when, for the benefit of this age, we recall his conduct toward his generals. He took care of their honor even more carefully than if it had been his own. It was his delight to give them opportunities for distinction, and when danger menaced alike himself and a general in another department, he would cheerfully send to his subordinate the best part of his force, and suffer no one to risk a defeat so soon as himself.

Nor should we forget that Washington was always vigilant; that he never was taken by surprise; that, with all his caution, he never missed an opportunity of striking a blow; that he never sent his army forward except with himself as its leader; that he never exposed them to deep roads and bad weather except when they could derive encouragement from his own presence and example; that he was always under fire with his men, and committed no error in the field but from excess of personal courage.

We must not forget that in the war of the Revolution, Washington, among other great objects, bore arms for the maritime rights of neutrals. When so many officers in our navy showed signs of disaffection, the first impulse of public feeling might approve a bold act, which spoke for the fidelity of a gallant commander. The just indignation which is felt at the conspirators who struck at our life as a nation, might exult when several of the least worthy of them fell into our hands. But this excitement only shed a brighter lustre on the moderation of the people, and their perfect mastery over their passions. With one voice, all have agreed that due respect must be shown to the neutral flag. A ship at sea is a portion of the territory of the power whose flag she may rightly bear. No naval officer of another nation may exercise judicial power on her deck; the free ship frees the cargo; a neutral ship in a voyage between neutral ports is protected by her flag; the passenger who in a neutral port steps on board a neutral ship, honestly bound for another neutral port, is as safe against seizure as if he were a guest

at the Tuileries or a barrister before a court in Westminster Hall. These good rules will gain renewed strength from their recognition by the American people in the very moment of a just indignation against men who were guilty of the darkest treason, and had fallen into their hands.

Washington not only upheld the liberty of the ocean; he was a thorough Republican. And how has our history justified his preference? How has this very rebellion borne testimony to the virtue and durability of popular institutions? The rebellion which we are putting down was the conspiracy of the rich, of opulent men, who count laborers as their capital. Our wide-extended suffrage is not only utterly innocent of it—it is the power which will not fail to crush it. The people prove their right to a popular government; they have chosen it, and have kept it in healthy motion; they will sustain it now, and hand it down in its glory and its power to their posterity. And this is true not only of men who were born on our soil, but of foreign-born citizens. Let the European skeptic about the large extension of the suffrage come among us, and we will show him a spectacle wonderful in his eyes, grand beyond his power of conception. That which in this contest is marked above all that has appeared is, the oneness of heart and purpose with which all the less wealthy classes of our people, of all nationalities, are devoted to the flag of the Union. The foreigners whom we have taken to our hearts and received as our fellow-citizens have been true to the country that has adopted them, have been sincere, earnest, and ready for every sacrifice. Slavery is the slow poison which has wrought all the evil; and a proud and selfish oligarchy are the authors of the conspiracy.

A rumor reaches us, let us hope it is unfounded, that three powers in Europe have combined to force a monarchical government upon the neighboring commonwealth of Mexico, at a time when she seems, if left to herself, better able to govern herself than ever heretofore. I confess I am unable to devise what material or what political interest of England can be promoted by this untoward pretension. Besides, America has never been a propagandist; our people, even in the days of our Revolution, made no war on monarchy, and did not even ask or seem to wish that their example might sway nations under different circumstances from our own. They left each hemisphere to take care of itself. A junction of three monarchs to put kingly power on our flank has an importance which can not escape attention. The royal families of Europe

would be justly incensed if the republican powers of America were to join together to attempt to force a republic on one of them. Is it right to attempt to force a monarchy on Americans? Is it wise to provoke a collision between the systems? or to try experiments on the mysterious sympathies of the millions?

If the opinions of Washington on slavery and on the slave-trade had been steadily respected, the country would have escaped all the calamity of the present civil war. The famous Fairfax meeting, at which Washington presided, on the 18th of July, 1774, led public opinion in declaring that it was "the most earnest wish of America to see an entire stop forever put to the wicked, cruel, and unnatural trade in slaves." The traffic was then condemned as an immorality and a crime. The sentiment was thoroughly American, and became the tradition, the living faith of the people. The centuries clasp hands and repeat it one to another! Yesterday the sentiment of Jefferson, that the slave-trade is a piratical warfare upon mankind, was reaffirmed by carrying into effect the sentence of a high tribunal of justice; and to save the lives and protect the happiness of thousands, a slave-trader was executed as a pirate and an enemy of the human race.

This day furnishes a spectacle of still more terrible retributive justice. The President of the pretended Confederate States of America is compelled to do public penance in his robes of office, for foolishly and wickedly aspiring to power that does not and can not exist, that dissolves and disappears as he draws near to grasp it. Missouri, which he has invaded, rises against him; Kentucky, where he desired to usurp authority, throws him off with indignant scorn; Eastern Tennessee, where Andrew Johnson must soon be speaking for Union with clarion notes of patriotism, starts to her feet in time to protest against the usurper; the people of Virginia, in their hearts, are against him; perhaps even the majority of the inhabitants of Richmond may be weary of his aspirations; and as he goes forth to-day to array himself in the unreal state for which he panted, his consideration drops away from him in the presence of his worshipers, irretrievably and forever; his conscience stings him with remorse for his crime; and the course of events convicts him of arrogance and folly. His elevation is but to a pillory, where he stands the derision of the world. Richmond, which he thought to make his capital, will soon be in the possession of one of our generals or of another, and nothing can save him from the just wrath of his country but a hasty exile.

If the views of Washington with regard to the slave-trade commend themselves to our approbation after the lapse of nearly ninety years, his opinions on slavery are so temperate and so clear that if they had been followed they would have established peace among us forever. On the 12th of April, 1786, he wrote to Robert Morris: "There is not a man living who wishes more sincerely than I do to see a plan adopted for the abolition of slavery." This was his fixed opinion; so that in the following month he declared to Lafayette: "By degrees the abolition of slavery certainly might and assuredly ought to be effected, and that, too, by legislative authority." On the 9th of September of the same year he avowed his resolution "never to possess another slave by purchase;" adding, "it being among my first wishes to see some plan adopted by which slavery in this country may be abolished by law."

In conformity with these views, the old confederation of the United States, at a time when the convention for framing our Constitution was in session, by a unanimous vote prohibited slavery forever in all the territory that then belonged to the United States; and one of the very first acts of Washington, as President, was to approve a law by which that ordinance might "continue to have full effect."

On the 6th of May, 1794, in the midst of his cares as President, he devised a plan for the sale of lands in Western Virginia and Western Pennsylvania, and after giving other reasons for his purpose, he adds: "I have another motive which makes me earnestly wish for the accomplishment of these things; it is, indeed, more powerful than all the rest, namely: to liberate a certain species of property which I possess, very repugnantly to my own feelings."

And in less than three months after he wrote that Farewell Address to which we this day have listened, he felt himself justified in announcing to his correspondent in Europe his hopes for the future in these words: "Nothing is more certain than that Maryland and Virginia must have laws for the gradual abolition of slavery, and at a period not remote."

But though Virginia and Maryland have not been wise enough to realize the confident prediction of the Father of his Country—though slavery is still permitted in the District of Columbia, from which Madison desired to see it removed—the cause of freedom has been steadily advancing. The line of 36° 30′, which formed a barrier to the progress of skilled labor to the southward, has been effaced. Our country, at one bound, crossed the Rocky Mountains;

and the wisdom of our people, as they laid the foundations of mighty empires on the coast of the Pacific, has brought about that to-day, from the Straits of Behring to the Straits of Magellan, the waves of the great ocean, as they roll in upon the shore, clap their hands in joy, for along all that wide region the land is cultivated by none but the free. Let us be grateful to a good Providence which has established liberty as the rule of our country beyond the possibility of a relapse.

For myself, I was one who desired to postpone, or rather hoped altogether to avoid, the collision which has taken place, trusting that society by degrees would have worked itself clear by its own innate strength and the virtue and resolution of the community. But slavery has forced upon us the issue, and has lifted up its hand to strike a death-blow at our existence as a people. It has avowed itself a desperate and determined enemy of our national life, of our unity as a republic, and henceforward no man deserves the name of a statesman who would consent to the introduction of that element of weakness and division into any new territory, or the admission of another slave State into the Union. Let us hope, rather, that the prediction of Washington will prove true, and that Virginia and Maryland will soon take their places as free States by the side of Ohio and Pennsylvania.

Finally: the people of the United States must this day derive from the example of Washington a lesson of perseverance. We have been forced into a strife from which there has been no safe escape but by the manifestation of an immense superiority of strength. The ages that are to come will hold a close and severe reckoning with the men in power to-day on the methods which they may adopt for solving the question before them. In the present state of things the worst rashness is that which yields to compromise from the feverishness of impatience. All the wise and good of the world have their eyes upon us. All civilized nations are waiting to see if we shall have the courage to make it manifest that freedom is the animating principle of our Constitution, and the life of the nation. But here, too, on this day we have only to read the counsels of Washington. When by his will he left swords to his nephews, he wrote: "These swords are accompanied with the injunction not to unsheath them for the purpose of shedding blood, except it be for self-defense, or in defense of their country or its rights; and in the latter case to keep them unsheathed, and prefer falling with them in their hands to the relinquishment thereof."

The President of the United States has charged us this day to meet and take counsel from the Farewell Address of Washington. We charge him in return, by his oath of office, by his pledges to the country, by the blood that has been shed and the treasure that has been expended, by the security of this generation, by the hopes of the next, by his desire to stand well with mankind and to be remembered in honor by future ages, to take to his heart this injunction of Washington.

Young men of New York! suffer one more word before we part, in grateful memory of the dead who have died for freedom, for us and our posterity. Long after the voice which now addresses you shall be silent in the grave, it is for you to keep fresh the glory of Winthrop, of Ellsworth, and of all others who being like yourselves, in the flush of youth, went into battle surrounded with the halo of eternity, and gave their lives in witness of their sincerity. The whole country mourns the loss of Lyon, and will not be comforted, enrolling his name by the side of Warren. They have passed away, but their spirit lives, and promises that our institutions, in so far as they rest on freedom, shall endure forever more.

WASHINGTON'S FAREWELL ADDRESS.

[In accordance with the following proclamation, the Farewell Address of Washington was read in public assemblies throughout the loyal States on the day designated, which, attended with patriotic and devotional exercises, constituted such a celebration of the Birthday of Washington as has never been equaled in interest and impressiveness:

BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES.

A PROCLAMATION.

WASHINGTON, *Wednesday, Feb.* 19, 1862.

It is recommended to the People of the United States that they assemble in their customary places, for public solemnities, on the twenty-second day of February instant, and celebrate the Anniversary of the Birthday of the Father of his Country, by causing to be read to them his "Immortal Farewell Address."

Given under my hand and the seal of the United States at Washington, the nineteenth day of February, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-two, and of the independence of the United States of America the eighty-sixth.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

By the President,
WILLIAM H. SEWARD, Secretary of State.]

FRIENDS AND FELLOW-CITIZENS—The period for a new election of a citizen to administer the executive government of the United States not being far distant, and the time actually arrived when your thoughts must be employed in designating the person who is to be clothed with that important trust, it appears to me proper, especially as it may conduce to a more distinct expression of the public voice, that I should now apprise you of the resolution I have formed, to decline being considered among the number of those out of whom a choice is to be made.

I beg you, at the same time, to do me the justice to be assured that this resolution has not been taken without a strict regard to all the considerations appertaining to the relation which binds a dutiful citizen to his country; and that, in withdrawing the tender of service which silence, in my situation, might imply, I am influenced by no diminution of zeal for your future interest, no deficiency of grateful respect for your past kindness, but am supported by a full conviction that the step is compatible with both.

The acceptance of, and continuance hitherto in, the office to which your suffrages have twice called me, have been a uniform

sacrifice of inclination to the opinion of duty, and to a deference for what appeared to be your desire. I constantly hoped that it would have been much earlier in my power, consistently with motives which I was not at liberty to disregard, to return to that retirement from which I had been reluctantly drawn. The strength of my inclination to do this, previous to the last election, had even led to the preparation of an address to declare it to you; but mature reflection on the then perplexed and critical posture of our affairs with foreign nations, and the unanimous advice of persons entitled to my confidence, impelled me to abandon the idea.

I rejoice that the state of your concerns, external as well as internal, no longer renders the pursuit of inclination incompatible with the sentiment of duty or propriety; and am persuaded, whatever partiality may be retained for my services, that, in the present circumstances of our country, you will not disapprove my determination to retire.

The impressions with which I first undertook the arduous trust were explained on the proper occasion. In the discharge of this trust, I will only say, that I have with good intentions contributed toward the organization and administration of the government the best exertions of which a very fallible judgment was capable. Not unconscious in the outset of the inferiority of my qualifications, experience, in my own eyes—perhaps still more in the eyes of others—has strengthened the motives to diffidence of myself; and every day the increasing weight of years admonishes me, more and more, that the shade of retirement is as necessary to me as it will be welcome. Satisfied that, if any circumstances have given peculiar value to my services, they were temporary, I have the consolation to believe that, while choice and prudence invite me to quit the political scene, patriotism does not forbid it.

In looking forward to the moment which is intended to terminate the career of my public life, my feelings do not permit me to suspend the deep acknowledgment of that debt of gratitude which I owe to my beloved country for the many honors it has conferred upon me; still more for the steadfast confidence with which it has supported me, and for the opportunities I have thence enjoyed of manifesting my inviolable attachment, by services faithful and persevering, though in usefulness unequal to my zeal. If benefits have resulted to our country from these services, let it always be remembered to your praise, and as an instructive example in our annals, that, under circumstances in which the passions, agitated in

every direction, were liable to mislead; amid appearances sometimes dubious, vicissitudes of fortune often discouraging; in situations in which, not unfrequently, want of success has countenanced the spirit of criticism—the constancy of your support was the essential prop of the efforts, and a guarantee of the plans by which they were effected. Profoundly penetrated with this idea, I shall carry it with me to my grave, as a strong incitement to unceasing vows that Heaven may continue to you the choicest tokens of its beneficence; that your union and brotherly affection may be perpetual; that the free constitution, which is the work of your hands, may be sacredly maintained; that its administration, in every department, may be stamped with wisdom and virtue; that, in fine, the happiness of the people of these States, under the auspices of liberty, may be made complete, by so careful a preservation and so prudent a use of this blessing as will acquire to them the glory of recommending it to the applause, the affection, and the adoption of every nation which is yet a stranger to it.

Here, perhaps, I ought to stop; but a solicitude for your welfare, which can not end but with my life, and the apprehension of danger natural to that solicitude, urge me, on an occasion like the present, to offer to your solemn contemplation, and to recommend to your frequent review, some sentiments, which are the result of much reflection, of no inconsiderable observation, and which appear to me all-important to the permanency of your felicity as a people. These will be afforded to you with the more freedom, as you can only see in them the disinterested warnings of a parting friend, who can possibly have no personal motive to bias his counsel; nor can I forget, as an encouragement to it, your indulgent reception of my sentiments on a former and not dissimilar occasion.

Interwoven as is the love of liberty with every ligament of your hearts, no recommendation of mine is necessary to fortify or confirm the attachment.

The unity of government, which constitutes you one people, is also now dear to you. It is justly so; for it is a main pillar in the edifice of your real independence, the support of your tranquillity at home, your peace abroad, of your safety, of your prosperity, of that very liberty which you so highly prize. But as it is easy to foresee that from different causes and from different quarters much pains will be taken, many artifices employed, to weaken in your minds the conviction of this truth—as this is the point in your po-

litical fortress against which the batteries of internal and external enemies will be most constantly and actively (though often covertly and insidiously) directed—it is of infinite moment that you should properly estimate the immense value of your national union to your collective and individual happiness; that you should cherish a cordial, habitual, and immovable attachment to it, accustoming yourselves to think and speak of it as of the palladium of your political safety and prosperity; watching for its preservation with jealous anxiety; discountenancing whatever may suggest even a suspicion that it can, in any event, be abandoned; and indignantly frowning upon the first dawning of every attempt to alienate any portion of our country from the rest, or to enfeeble the sacred ties which now link together the various parts.

For this you have every inducement of sympathy and interest. Citizens, by birth or choice, of a common country, that country has a right to concentrate your affections. The name of *American*, which belongs to you in your national capacity, must always exalt the just pride of patriotism more than any appellation derived from local discriminations. With slight shades of difference, you have the same religion, manners, habits, and political principles. You have, in a common cause, fought and triumphed together; the independence and liberty you possess are the work of joint counsels and joint efforts, of common dangers, sufferings, and successes.

But these considerations, however powerfully they address themselves to your sensibility, are greatly outweighed by those which apply more immediately to your interest; here every portion of our country finds the most commanding motives for carefully guarding and preserving the union of the whole.

The North, in an unrestrained intercourse with the South, protected by the equal laws of a common government, finds, in the productions of the latter, great additional resources of maritime and commercial enterprise, and precious materials of manufacturing industry. The South, in the same intercourse, benefiting by the agency of the North, sees its agriculture grow and its commerce expand. Turning partly into its own channels the seamen of the North, it finds its particular navigation invigorated; and while it contributes, in different ways, to nourish and increase the general mass of the national navigation, it looks forward to the protection of a maritime strength to which itself is unequally adapted. The East, in like intercourse with the West, already finds, and, in the

progressive improvement of interior communication, by land and water, will more and more find, a valuable vent for the commodities which it brings from abroad or manufactures at home. The West derives from the East supplies requisite to its growth and comfort, and, what is perhaps of still greater consequence, it must, of necessity, owe the secure enjoyment of indispensable outlets for its own productions to the weight, influence, and the future maritime strength of the Atlantic side of the Union, directed by an indissoluble community of interest as one nation. Any other tenure by which the West can hold this essential advantage, whether derived from its own separate strength or from an apostate and unnatural connection with any foreign power, must be intrinsically precarious.

While, then, every part of our country thus feels an immediate and particular interest in union, all the parts combined can not fail to find, in the united mass of means and efforts, greater strength, greater resource, proportionably greater security from external danger, a less frequent interruption of their peace by foreign nations, and, what is of inestimable value, they must derive from union an exemption from those broils and wars between themselves, which so frequently afflict neighboring countries, not tied together by the same government, which their own rivalships alone would be sufficient to produce, but which opposite foreign alliances, attachments, and intrigues would stimulate and embitter. Hence, likewise, they will avoid the necessity of those overgrown military establishments, which, under any form of government, are inauspicious to liberty, and which are to be regarded as particularly hostile to republican liberty; in this sense it is that your union ought to be considered as the main prop of your liberty, and that the love of the one ought to endear to you the preservation of the other.

These considerations speak a persuasive language to every reflecting and virtuous mind, and exhibit a continuance of the Union as a primary object of patriotic desire. Is there a doubt whether a common government can embrace so large a sphere? Let experience solve it. To listen to mere speculation, in such a case, were criminal. We are authorized to hope that a proper organization of the whole, with the auxiliary agency of governments for the respective subdivisions, will afford a happy issue to the experiment. It is well worth a full and fair experiment. With such powerful and obvious motives to union, affecting all parts of our country,

while experience shall not have demonstrated its impracticability, there will always be reason to distrust the patriotism of those who, in any quarter, may endeavor to weaken its bands.

In contemplating the causes which may disturb our Union, it occurs, as a matter of serious concern, that any ground should have been furnished for characterizing parties by geographical discriminations—Northern and Southern, Atlantic and Western—whence designing men may endeavor to excite a belief that there is a real difference of local interests and views. One of the expedients of party to acquire influence within particular districts is to misrepresent the opinions and aims of other districts. You can not shield yourselves too much against the jealousies and heart-burnings which spring from these misrepresentations; they tend to render alien to each other those who ought to be bound together by fraternal affection. The inhabitants of our Western country have lately had a useful lesson on this head; they have seen in the negotiation by the Executive, and in the unanimous ratification by the Senate, of the treaty with Spain, and in the universal satisfaction at that event throughout the United States, a decisive proof how unfounded were the suspicions propagated among them, of a policy in the general government, and in the Atlantic States, unfriendly to their interests in regard to the Mississippi; they have been witnesses to the formation of two treaties—that with Great Britain and that with Spain—which secure to them everything they could desire in respect to our foreign relations, toward confirming their prosperity. Will it not be their wisdom to rely for the preservation of these advantages on the Union by which they were procured? Will they not henceforth be deaf to those advisers, if such there are, who would sever them from their brethren and connect them with aliens?

To the efficacy and permanency of your Union, a government for the whole is indispensable. No alliance, however strict, between the parts, can be an adequate substitute; they must inevitably experience the infractions and interruptions which all alliances, in all time, have experienced. Sensible of this momentous truth, you have improved upon your first essay, by the adoption of a constitution of government better calculated than your former for an intimate Union, and for the efficacious management of your common concerns. This government, the offspring of our own choice, uninfluenced and unawed, adopted upon full investigation and mature deliberation, completely free in its principles, in the distri-

bution of its powers, uniting security with energy, and containing within itself a provision for its own amendment, has a just claim to your confidence and your support. Respect for its authority, compliance with its laws, acquiescence in its measures, are duties enjoined by the fundamental maxims of true liberty. The basis of our political systems is the right of the people to make and to alter their constitutions of government; but the constitution which at any time exists, till changed by an explicit and authentic act of the whole people, is sacredly obligatory upon all. The very idea of the power and the right of the people to establish government presupposes the duty of every individual to obey the established government.

All obstructions to the execution of the laws, all combinations and associations, under whatever plausible character, with the real design to direct, control, counteract, or awe the regular deliberation and action of the constituted authorities, are destructive to this fundamental principle, and of fatal tendency. They serve to organize faction, to give it an artificial and extraordinary force, to put in the place of the delegated will of the nation the will of a party—often a small but artful and enterprising minority of the community—and, according to the alternate triumphs of different parties, to make the public administration the mirror of the ill-concerted and incongruous projects of faction rather than the organ of consistent and wholesome plans, digested by common counsels, and modified by mutual interests.

However combinations or associations of the above description may now and then answer popular ends, they are likely, in the course of time and things, to become potent engines, by which cunning, ambitious, and unprincipled men will be enabled to subvert the power of the people, and to usurp for themselves the reins of government; destroying, afterward, the very engine which had lifted them to unjust dominion.

Toward the preservation of your government, and the permanency of your present happy state, it is requisite, not only that you steadily discountenance irregular oppositions to its acknowledged authority, but also that you resist with care the spirit of innovation upon its principles, however specious the pretexts. One method of assault may be to effect, in the forms of the constitution, alterations which will impair the energy of the system, and thus to undermine what can not be directly overthrown. In all the changes to which you may be invited, remember that time

and habit are at least as necessary to fix the true character of governments as of other human institutions; that experience is the surest standard by which to test the real tendency of the existing constitution of a country; that facility in changes, upon the credit of mere hypothesis and opinion, exposes to perpetual change, from the endless variety of hypothesis and opinion; and remember, especially, that for the efficient management of your common interests, in a country so extensive as ours, a government of as much vigor as is consistent with the perfect security of liberty is indispensable. Liberty itself will find in such a government, with powers properly distributed and adjusted, its surest guardian. It is, indeed, little else than a name, where the government is too feeble to withstand the enterprises of faction, to confine each member of the society within the limits prescribed by the laws, and to maintain all in the secure and tranquil enjoyment of the rights of person and property.

I have already intimated to you the danger of parties in the state, with particular reference to the founding of them on geographical discriminations. Let me now take a more comprehensive view, and warn you, in the most solemn manner, against the baneful effects of the spirit of party generally.

This spirit, unfortunately, is inseparable from our nature, having its root in the strongest passions of the human mind. It exists, under different shapes, in all governments, more or less stifled, controlled, or repressed; but in those of the popular form it is seen in its greatest rankness, and is truly their worst enemy.

The alternate domination of one faction over another, sharpened by the spirit of revenge, natural to party dissension, which, in different ages and countries, has perpetrated the most horrid enormities, is itself a frightful despotism. But this leads, at length, to a more formal and permanent despotism. The disorders and miseries which result gradually incline the minds of men to seek security and repose in the absolute power of an individual; and, sooner or later, the chief of some prevailing faction, more able or more fortunate than his competitors, turns this disposition to the purposes of his own elevation on the ruins of public liberty.

Without looking forward to an extremity of this kind (which, nevertheless, ought not to be entirely out of sight), the common and continual mischiefs of the spirit of party are sufficient to make it the interest and duty of a wise people to discourage and restrain it.

It serves always to distract the public councils and enfeeble the public administration. It agitates the community with ill-founded jealousies and false alarms; kindles the animosity of one part against another; foments, occasionally, riot and insurrection. It opens the door to foreign influence and corruption, which find a facilitated access to the government itself through the channels of party passions. Thus the policy and the will of one country are subjected to the policy and will of another.

There is an opinion that parties, in free countries, are useful

checks upon the administration of the government, and serve to keep alive the spirit of liberty. This, within certain limits, is probably true; and in governments of a monarchical cast, patriotism may look with indulgence, if not with favor, upon the spirit of party. But in those of the popular character, in governments purely elective, it is a spirit not to be encouraged. From their natural tendency, it is certain there will always be enough of that spirit for every salutary purpose. And there being constant danger of excess, the effort ought to be by force of public opinion to mitigate and assuage it. A fire not to be quenched, it demands a uniform vigilance to prevent its bursting into a flame, lest, instead of warming, it should consume.

It is important, likewise, that the habits of thinking, in a free country, should inspire caution in those intrusted with its administration, to confine themselves within their respective constitutional spheres, avoiding, in the exercise of the powers of one department, to encroach upon another. The spirit of encroachment tends to consolidate the powers of all the departments in one, and thus to create, whatever the form of government, a real despotism. A just estimate of that love of power and proneness to abuse it which predominate in the human heart is sufficient to satisfy us of the truth of this position. The necessity of reciprocal checks in the exercise of political power, by dividing and distributing it into different depositories, and constituting each the guardian of the public weal, against invasions by the others, has been evinced by experiments, ancient and modern—some of them in our own country and under our own eyes. To preserve them must be as necessary as to institute them. If, in the opinion of the people, the distribution or modification of the constitutional powers be, in any particular, wrong, let it be corrected by an amendment in the way which the constitution designates. But let there be no change by usurpation; for though this, in one instance, may be the instrument of good, it is the customary weapon by which free governments are destroyed. The precedent must always greatly overbalance, in permanent evil, any partial or transient benefit which the use can, at any time, yield.

Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports. In vain would that man claim the tribute of patriotism who should labor to subvert these great pillars of human happiness, these firmest props of the duties of men and citizens. The mere politician, equally with the pious man, ought to respect and to cherish them. A volume could not trace all their connections with private and public felicity. Let it simply be asked, Where is the security for property, for reputation, for life, if the sense of religious obligation *desert* the oaths which are the instruments of investigation in courts of justice? And let us with caution indulge the supposition that morality can be maintained without religion. Whatever may be conceded to the influence of refined education on minds of peculiar structure, reason and experience both forbid us to ex-

pect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principles.

It is substantially true, that virtue or morality is a necessary spring of popular government. The rule, indeed, extends with more or less force to every species of free government. Who that is a sincere friend to it can look with indifference upon attempts to shake the foundation of the fabric?

Promote, then, as an object of primary importance, institutions for the general diffusion of knowledge. In proportion as the structure of a government gives force to public opinion, it is essential that public opinion should be enlightened.

As a very important source of strength and security, cherish public credit. One method of preserving it is to use it as sparingly as possible; avoiding occasions of expense by cultivating peace, but remembering, also, that timely disbursements to prepare for danger frequently prevent much greater disbursements to repel it; avoiding, likewise, the accumulation of debt, not only by shunning occasions of expense, but by vigorous exertions in time of peace to discharge the debts which unavoidable wars may have occasioned; not ungenerously throwing upon posterity the burden which we ourselves ought to bear. The execution of these maxims belongs to your representatives, but it is necessary that public opinion should co-operate. To facilitate to them the performance of their duty, it is essential that you should practically bear in mind that toward the payment of debts there must be revenue; that to have revenue there must be taxes; that no taxes can be devised which are not more or less inconvenient and unpleasant; that the intrinsic embarrassment inseparable from the selection of the proper objects (which is always a choice of difficulties), ought to be a decisive motive for a candid construction of the conduct of the government in making it, and for a spirit of acquiescence in the measures for obtaining revenue which the public exigencies may at any time dictate.

Observe good faith and justice toward all nations; cultivate peace and harmony with all; religion and morality enjoin this conduct, and can it be that good policy does not equally enjoin it? It will be worthy of a free, enlightened, and, at no distant period, a great nation, to give to mankind the magnanimous and too novel example of a people always guided by an exalted justice and benevolence. Who can doubt that, in the course of time and things, the fruits of such a plan would richly repay any temporary advantages which might be lost by a steady adherence to it? Can it be that Providence has not connected the permanent felicity of a nation with its virtue? The experiment, at least, is recommended by every sentiment which ennobles human natnre. Alas! is it rendered impossible by its vices?

In the execution of such a plan, nothing is more essential than that permanent inveterate antipathies against particular nations, and passionate attachments for others, should be excluded, and that, in place of them, just and amicable feelings toward all should be

cultivated. The nation which indulges toward another an habitual hatred, or an habitual fondness, is, in some degree, a slave. It is a slave to its animosity or to its affection, either of which is sufficient to lead it astray from its duty and its interest. Antipathy in one nation against another disposes each more readily to offer insult and injury, to lay hold of slight causes of umbrage, and to be haughty and intractable when accidental or trifling occasions of dispute occur. Hence, frequent collisions, obstinate, envenomed, and bloody contests. The nation, prompted by ill-will and resentment, sometimes impels to war the government, contrary to the best calculations of policy. The government sometimes participates in the national propensity, and adopts, through passion, what reason would reject; at other times it makes the animosity of the nation subservient to projects of hostility, instigated by pride, ambition, and other sinister and pernicious motives. The peace often, sometimes perhaps the liberty of nations, has been the victim.

So, likewise, a passionate attachment of one nation to another produces a variety of evils. Sympathy for the favorite nation, facilitating the illusion of an imaginary common interest, in cases where no real common interest exists, and infusing into one the enmities of the other, betrays the former into a participation in the quarrels and wars of the latter, without adequate inducement or justification. It leads also to concessions to the favorite nation of privileges denied to others, which is apt doubly to injure the nation making the concessions, by unnecessarily parting with what ought to have been retained, and by exciting jealousy, ill-will, and a disposition to retaliate, in the parties from whom equal privileges are withheld; and it gives to ambitious, corrupted, or deluded citizens (who devote themselves to the favorite nation), facility to betray or sacrifice the interest of their own country, without odium, sometimes even with popularity; gilding with the appearance of a virtuous sense of obligation, a commendable deference for public opinion, or a laudable zeal for public good, the base or foolish compliances of ambition, corruption, or infatuation.

As avenues to foreign influence in innumerable ways, such attachments are particularly alarming to the truly enlightened and independent patriot. How many opportunities do they afford to tamper with domestic factions, to practice the art of seduction, to mislead public opinion, to influence or awe the public councils! Such an attachment of a small or weak toward a great and powerful nation dooms the former to be the satellite of the latter.

Against the insidious wiles of foreign influence (I conjure you to believe me, fellow-citizens) the jealousy of a free people ought to be *constantly* awake, since history and experience prove that foreign influence is one of the most baneful foes of republican government. But that jealousy, to be useful, must be impartial, else it becomes the instrument of the very influence to be avoided, instead of a defense against it. Excessive partiality for one foreign nation, and excessive dislike for another, cause those whom they actuate to

see danger only on one side, and serve to vail, and even second, the arts of influence on the other. Real patriots, who may resist the intrigues of the favorite, are liable to become suspected and odious, while its tools and dupes usurp the applause and confidence of the people, to surrender their interests.

The great rule of conduct for us, in regard to foreign nations, is, in extending our commercial relations, to have with them as little political connection as possible. So far as we have already formed engagements, let them be fulfilled with perfect good faith. Here let us stop.

Europe has a set of primary interests, which to us have none or a very remote relation. Hence she must be engaged in frequent controversies, the causes of which are essentially foreign to our concerns. Hence, therefore, it must be unwise in us to implicate ourselves, by artificial ties, in the ordinary vicissitudes of her politics, or the ordinary combinations and collisions of her friendships or enmities.

Our detached and distant situation invites and enables us to pursue a different course. If we remain one people, under an efficient government, the period is not far off when we may defy material injury from external annoyance, when we may take such an attitude as will cause the neutrality we may at any time resolve upon to be scrupulously respected—when belligerent nations, under the impossibility of making acquisitions upon us, will not lightly hazard the giving us provocation—when we may choose peace or war, as our interest, guided by justice, shall counsel.

Why forego the advantages of so peculiar a situation? Why quit our own to stand upon foreign ground? Why, by interweaving our destiny with that of any part of Europe, entangle our peace and prosperity in the toils of European ambition, rivalship, interest, humor, or caprice?

It is our true policy to steer clear of permanent alliances with any portion of the foreign world; so far, I mean, as we are now at liberty to do it; for let me not be understood as capable of patronizing infidelity to existing engagements. I hold the maxim no less applicable to public than to private affairs, that honesty is always the best policy. I repeat it, therefore, let those engagements be observed in their genuine sense. But, in my opinion, it is unnecessary, and would be unwise, to extend them.

Taking care always to keep ourselves, by suitable establishments, on a respectable defensive posture, we may safely trust to temporary alliances for extraordinary emergencies.

Harmony, and a liberal intercourse with all nations, are recommended by policy, humanity, and interest. But even our commercial policy should hold an equal and impartial hand; neither seeking nor granting exclusive favors or preferences; consulting the natural course of things; diffusing and diversifying, by gentle means, the streams of commerce, but forcing nothing; establishing, with powers so disposed, in order to give trade a stable course, to define the rights of our merchants, and to enable the

government to support them, conventional rules of intercourse, the best that present circumstances and mutual opinions will permit, but temporary, and liable to be, from time to time, abandoned or varied, as experience and circumstances shall dictate; constantly keeping in view that it is folly in one nation to look for disinterested favors from another; that it must pay, with a portion of its independence, for whatever it may accept under that character; that by such acceptance it may place itself in the condition of having given equivalents for nominal favors, and yet of being reproached with ingratitude for not giving more. There can be no greater error than to expect, or calculate upon, real favors from nation to nation. It is an illusion which experience must cure, which a just pride ought to discard.

In offering to you, my countrymen, these counsels of an old and affectionate friend, I dare not hope they will make the strong and lasting impression I could wish—that they will control the usual current of the passions, or prevent our nation from running the course which has hitherto marked the destiny of nations; but if I may even flatter myself that they may be productive of some partial benefit, some occasional good, that they may now and then recur to moderate the fury of party spirit, to warn against the mischiefs of foreign intrigues, to guard against the impostures of pretended patriotism—this hope will be a full recompense for the solicitude for your welfare by which they have been dictated.

How far, in the discharge of my official duties, I have been guided by the principles which have been delineated, the public records, and other evidences of my conduct, must witness to you and the world. To myself, the assurance of my own conscience is, that I have at least believed myself to be guided by them.

In relation to the still subsisting war in Europe, my proclamation of the 22d of April, 1793, is the index to my plan. Sanctioned by your approving voice, and by that of your representatives in both Houses of Congress, the spirit of that measure has continually governed me, uninfluenced by any attempts to deter or divert me from it.

After deliberate examination, with the aid of the best lights I could obtain, I was well satisfied that our country, under all the circumstances of the case, had a right to take, and was bound in duty and interest to take, a neutral position. Having taken it, I determined, as far as should depend upon me, to maintain it with moderation, perseverance, and firmness.

The considerations which respect the right to hold this conduct, it is not necessary on this occasion to detail. I will only observe that, according to my understanding of the matter, that right, so far from being denied by any of the belligerent powers, has been virtually admitted by all.

The duty of holding a neutral conduct may be inferred, without anything more, from the obligation which justice and humanity impose on every nation, in cases in which it is free to act, to

maintain inviolate the relations of peace and amity toward other nations.

The inducements of interest, for observing that conduct, will best be referred to your own reflections and experience. With me, a predominant motive has been to endeavor to gain time to our country to settle and mature its yet recent institutions, and to progress, without interruption, to that degree of strength and consistency which is necessary to give it, humanly speaking, the command of its own fortunes.

Though, in reviewing the incidents of my administration, I am unconscious of intentional error, I am, nevertheless, too sensible of my defects not to think it probable that I may have committed many errors. Whatever they may be, I fervently beseech the Almighty to avert or mitigate the evils to which they may tend. I shall also carry with me the hope that my country will never cease to view them with indulgence, and that, after forty-five years of my life dedicated to its service with an upright zeal, the faults of incompetent abilities will be consigned to oblivion, as myself must soon be to the mansions of rest.

Relying on its kindness in this, as in other things, and actuated by that fervent love toward it which is so natural to a man who views in it the native soil of himself and his progenitors for several generations, I anticipate, with pleasing expectation, that retreat in which I promise myself to realize, without alloy, the sweet enjoyment of partaking, in the midst of my fellow-citizens, the benign influence of good laws under a free government—the ever favorite object of my heart—and the happy reward, as I trust, of our mutual cares, labors, and dangers.

GEORGE WASHINGTON.

UNITED STATES, 17*th September*, 1796.

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